

"A summer hut is built of thin poles of a conical form, covered with the inner bark of birch, on some extensive meadow. It is ornamented inside and out with branches of the birch-tree, and a hearth is made in the centre. Relations and acquaintances are invited to the banquet; but all guests are welcome of every nation indiscriminately. The magicians take the head seats; others are seated according to the estimation of their seniority. (1)

1. Years do not secure the title of senior, (Oghonior,) which is the greatest term of respect that the Socha know. Magicians have it, and all such as are capable of advising the proper means to be adopted to secure success to such public and private concerns as are virtuous and good."

116, 342, 574, 823

"They always take care that the doors of their huts shall face the east. The fire-place is nearly in the middle; the back of the chimney towards the door, and a free passage quite round it. The sides of the hut are furnished with benches and small cabins, which serve for sleeping places. The bench extends about four feet into the hut, where the inhabitants sit. The men keep the south side, and the women the north. Except the hostess, no woman may give any thing to eat or drink to a male stranger before the fire-place, but must walk round the chimney to present it."

"Cunning, lying, and theft, these undesirable traits of character in the Yakut are in exact proportion to the amount of contact they have with their conquerors. The Yakuts from distant camps and those who live in camps near the towns, and are in contact with the transported settlers there, form two quite distinct races, so greatly do their characteristics differ. Hospitality is one of the good qualities of the Yakuts. Each passer-by enters at any time any hut he likes, thanks to the custom of keeping the doors unfastened. In the huts the 'best place', the seat along the eastern side of the wall, is kept free for visitors and the host offers to them the best he has in the hut. The poor Yakut frequently has only field mice for food, but for the guest he reserves a piece of horseflesh or hare. Sometimes the Yakuts who live on the highway are absolutely ruined by the generous hospitality they show to passers-by.

The Yakutian character should be studied in some far distant camp which has never been visited by transported settlers, traders, or the official having the methods and principles described by Gilder. "

"As my hut [RCH: in Sredne Kolymsk] was directly opposite the Assembly House I could not complain of neglect on the part of visitors. The Yakuts soon found out that we never sent them away, and the door had hardly closed after one visitor before another came in. Some of them had an artless way of obtaining things. One would come and stand in the doorway, bowing.

'What do you want, friend?' I asked.

The 'friend' takes out from his breast a gnawed piece of yukala or half-cured fish and offers it to me, and it would appear that he has travelled 500 versts in order to make this present. After this the 'friend' not only feels quite at home, but even considers that he has placed me under an obligation. He removes [35] his eared cap, loosens his belt, sits down and, when tea is given him, he mentions that he is very fond of bread and vodka. He silently pushes his empty tobacco pouch forward, as a hint that it requires filling; then, taking my knife, suggests an exchange, the transaction being very profitable for the 'friend'. Next, taking my comb, he uses it on his stiff, harsh, doubtful-looking hair, then, after asking for several other trifling things, he unwillingly takes his departure, casting a lingering glance around to see whether there is anything more for which he can ask. We feared these Yakuts with their presents as we feared fire. But with such guests what could be done? We lacked courage to show them the door. "

"From Jakutsk to the river Aldan, 350 wersts distant, the road led me through Jakutish ulusses, or dwelling-places, over plains scattered with woods, lakes, corn-fields, and meadows. The woods, everywhere, consisted of larch and beech-trees. An uluss comprehends a certain number of dwellings, under the government of a Knäsck (1), or elder. We generally passed our nights in the jurts of these Knäsks,

1. Knäs--the diminutive of this word signifies, in Russian, a prince.

and were always received with great kindness. Hospitality is, in fact, the first virtue among the Jakuts in general. No sooner does a traveller arrive at a place, than they hasten towards him, helping him off his horse, and conducting him into their yurt, enlarging their fire, [9] taking off his clothes, and cleaning them from the snow, &c. The bed is made ready for him in the most retired place, the table covered with the best their house can afford, and his comfort consulted in every particular to the utmost of their power; while to all this civility they sometimes add the present of a fox's or a sable's skin, I always strove to repay their kindness by such trifles as I knew to be most acceptable. Tobacco is a great luxury with them; but they are so extravagantly fond of brandy, that when one glass is given them they make no scruple of asking for a second, and even a third."

16: Great Britain Admiralty -- 168 [5] G-3 (no date) 1920

Yakut

116, 183, 264, 574, 782

"They have many customs and superstitions. No woman other than the hostess may give anything to eat or drink to a male stranger before the fire-place, but must walk round the chimney to present it. It is wrong to wash plates; such waste will produce scarcity; earthen vessels are cleaned by being burnt; it is not felt then that anything is wasted because the food thus consumed is an offering to the fire, which also receives a small spoonful as an offering of thanks."

/175 cont./

- 137 The timber line now passed by us lies at $71\ 1/2^{\circ}$ latitude. It is not fixed very precisely, for individual streaks of forest extend tongue-like into the tundra, and here and there one finds smaller or larger islands of forest, so that here the transition from forest to tundra, in contrast to what we saw earlier, was a very gradual one. Lone before our last camp it was noticed that the forest was becoming steadily poorer and more stunted, and from there the signs of its imminent cessation multiplied. On the next day we crossed the watershed between the Pur and the Boljkalák, the last large tributary of the Olenék. Since it was no longer snowing we advanced quite rapidly, but when it became dark we had still not reached by far our camping place designated for tonight by the guide, but rather only a very small hut in the middle of the tundra, which we used to revive ourselves somewhat. Then we continued our journey in the darkness and finally reached a small, but cozily warm balagan on the little river Molokó, which empties into the Boljkalák. On the next day we followed the course of this little river and then the Boljkalák itself, but our /176/ guide, in shortening the route by cutting off the bends, multiplied its difficulties and in crossing the steep sides of the bank our narten, and we with them, frequently took a fall. Otherwise Czekanowsky [133] was very satisfied. The rocks here decidedly no longer belonged to the Silurian formation which had become so very boring to us, [134] for coal appeared, but unfortunately no petrifications.

- 122 In the evening--it was October 20, that is, exactly four months since we had reached the river system of the Olenék at 123 the Ljúscha Ongókton -- we found ourselves at the goal of our long 621 journey, at the little village of Boljkalák lying at the mouth of the Boljkalák into the Olenék, officially Ustj-Olénskoje, i.e., mouth village of the Olenék, and stopped in front of the stately balagan of the local elder, which had been assigned to us for a dwelling. Informed previously about our imminent arrival, the entire male population -- it was an imposing crowd; we at least had not seen so many people together for a long time, but in all only seven families are said to live here -- stood ready to welcome us and greeted us with low bows as we climbed out, while upon entering the balagan we were received by the ladies of the house.

The Yakuts

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(naturally, subordinate in turn to the tsarist administration); those who sat at the head of them, the elders and chief elders, were either toyons in origin, or mere servants who obeyed them implicitly. The clan and nasleg meetings (munnyakh), at which the poor people dared not say a word, played the same part.

Thus, the frequently expressed opinion that the clan structure was retained among the Yakuts right up to the 20th century is a profound error.

Just as erroneous is the opinion of certain ethnographers that there were elements of the matriarchate among the Yakuts. This view is based on the fact that there was a division of the aga-uus (paternal clan) into smaller groups, iye-uuha (literally, "maternal clan"). The latter do indeed figure in the 19th-century official documents under the name of "tribal clans." But, despite the Yakut name, these small groups were not genuine maternal clans; kinship and descent were not reckoned on the female but on the male side. The name "iye-uus" is evidently to be explained by the fact that these subdivisions were descended from one clan progenitor, though from different wives.

More direct, although also more or less modified, survivals of primitive-communal relations were retained by the Yakuts in certain characteristic customs, such as, for example, elements of collectivism in fishing. The Yakuts retained the custom of communal net-fishing in rivers and lakes belonging to individual naslegs and clans. The catch, which was often an extremely abundant one, was divided on the spot among those taking part as well as among the onlookers (though the latter received less, admittedly). In the north there was a similar custom for moulting geese, which were caught by tens of thousands.

The custom of mutual gifts (belekh) was also very archaic. The Yakut would visit a relative or friend, sometimes at a far-away spot, and receive a gift from his host, as though in gratitude for the visit; the gift would be a horse, saddle, a certain amount of meat, and so on, and in return, according to custom, he would invite the giver to visit him, although it might be a long time after, and present him with a gift of approximately the same value. These gifts were often timed to coincide with weddings, though they were sometimes presented independently.

The custom of hospitality was also observed. Hosts had to regale a guest visiting them, even though he might be a complete stranger, with the same food that they ate themselves. Since this custom clashed with the capitalist psychology, reared on commercial relationships, it was regarded in many cases as an inevitable evil which everyone tried to avoid in every way he could; this often resulted in comic episodes in which the hosts (more often than not wealthy people) hastily hid away the food they were about to eat when they saw a guest approaching, while the latter resorted to various tricks in order to find where the food was hidden. According to the old custom, the host was also obliged to invite relatives and neighbors whenever a beast was slaughtered and to offer them meat. Nonobservance of this custom gave rise to public censure.

Apart from these individual customs, the Yakut society admittedly retained the characteristic, half-conscious patriarchal ideology, which was clearly not a reflection of their true relationships, although it served the interests of the toyons, who knew how to make use of it. The toyons liked to style themselves the forefathers, heads and sponsors of their clans; they skillfully fomented various interclan quarrels (usually